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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR CONGRATULATES NEW MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEMBERS; TWO WOMEN APPOINTED IN HISTORIC FIRST

REF: KUWAIT 2416

1. (U) Summary: Ten Kuwaiti men were elected in June 2 elections to the 2005-2009 Municipal Council and the GOK appointed on June 3 two women and four men to the Council completing the formation of the 16-member local governing body. The Ambassador paid courtesy calls on several newly-elected Council members to congratulate them on their victory and to hear their perspectives and priorities for the new Council. The appointment of two women Council members marks the first time women have served on the Council and is the first example of the increase in woman's political participation since the May 16 legislation granting Kuwaiti women full political rights. End Summary.

2. (U) The Ambassador met separately, on June 5 and 6, with six of the ten elected Council members to discuss their electoral victories and policy priorities. The political goals of the newly-elected members were primarily locally focused and ranged from promoting private sector development and combating corruption, inside and outside of the Council, to changing the Municipal Council process by adding more technical expertise to the Council's work. All members told the Ambassador that the presence of women on the Council was a welcome addition. Dr. Fadhel Safar Ali Safar, the only Shi'a on the Council, said that he was sure that the women would perform better than most of the men. (Note: Election day voter turnout was low in most of the ten constituencies, estimated at 50 percent nationwide -- much lower than the 73 percent turnout during the 2003 Parliamentary elections. The average number of votes cast for each winner was 3,150. End Note.)

3. (SBU) Among the elected members are one Shi'a, one Sunni Islamist, two local independents, and six tribal Councilmen. Of the six tribal members, Abdullah Al-Azmi, has a university education and two out of six, Mohammed Al-Mutairi and Zayed Al-Azmi, did not complete high school. The tribal members include two Al-Azmis, two Al-Mutairis, one Al-Ajmi, and one Al-Enezi -- all prominent and influential Kuwaiti tribes. (Note: That six are considered 'tribal' means that they were elected with great help from their tribe, may be subject to extended family pressures when making decisions in order to best benefit their tribe, and also implies that they are politically and socially more conservative and provincial in their views. End Note.)

4. (U) The GOK appointed, on June 3, six members to the Municipal Council, including two women engineers Shaykha Fatima Nasser Al-Sabah and Fawziya Al-Bahar. The appointed members were chosen for their technical expertise and reaction to the appointments has been overwhelmingly positive. Of the six, there are three engineers, two lawyers, and one management logistician. The appointment of two women, both of whom studied in the U.S., marks the first tangible manifestation of the May 16 legislation granting women full political rights. Although women were not permitted to participate in the elections, this is the first time women have been eligible to be appointed to the Council. Shaykha Fatima told the press that although the Council is a technical institution, she would not hesitate to use her position to support women's issues.

5. (U) The ten elected members of the Municipal Council are:

- Dr. Fadhel Safar Ali Safar, the Shi'a head of the Petroleum Information Department at Kuwait Oil Company
- Khalifa Msaed Al-Khorafi, cousin to National Assembly Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi and three-time former member of the Council
- Mohammed Ibrahim Al-Mufarrej, a local businessman
- Abdul Aziz Al-Shayji, a Sunni Islamist and a U.S.-trained engineer
- Abdullah Al-Azmi, a tribal two-time former member of the Council
- Mohammed Majed Bouredden Al-Mutairi, a tribal former deputy chairman of the Khaitan Cooperative society
- Majed Moussa Abdel Rahman Al-Mutairi, a tribal former member of the Municipal Council
- Askar Al-Enezi, a tribal bureaucrat and the youngest member of the Council at 34
- Fahaid Saad Mubarak Al-Ajmi, a tribal former member of the Council
- Zayed Ayesh Al-Azmi, a tribal bureaucrat with the Interior

Ministry

16. (U) The six appointed members are:

- Shaykha Fatima bint Nasser Al-Sabah, an engineer and sister to former Minister and Ambassador to the U.S. Shaykh Saud Nasser Al-Sabah, who until her appointment was the Assistant Undersecretary for Engineering Affairs at the Amiri Diwan
- Fawziya bint Mohammed Ahmed AbdelRahman Al-Bahar, who spent 29 years working as an engineer in the Ministry of Electricity and Water (Note: The Ministries of Electricity and Oil were consolidated into the Energy Ministry in 2003 End Note.)
- Salah Fahad Al-As'ousi earned an M.S. in Logistics Science and was the head of the expropriation committee in the Kuwait Municipality
- Khaled Al-Khaled, a lawyer and a member of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Adel Al-Khorafi, a civil engineer, chairman of the Kuwait Society of Engineers, and also a cousin to National Assembly Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi
- Abdul Rahman Al-Humaidan, a lawyer and chairman of the Kuwaiti bar Association

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